



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF
CALIFORNIA
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS
Public Information Office
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3688
www.courtinfo.ca.gov

415-865-7740

Lynn Holton
Public Information Officer

NEWSRELEASE

Release Number: 12

Release Date: March 11, 2005

Services Pending for Justice Robert K. Puglia

Sacramento—Retired Justice Robert K. Puglia, who served for 24 years as the Presiding Justice of the Court of Appeal for the Third Appellate District, died today from complications of cancer. He was 75.

“He was a beloved and legendary figure in the Sacramento legal community and the state judiciary,” stated Associate Justice Fred K. Morrison, of the Third Appellate District. “His strong leadership, towering intellect and elegant writing style left an indelible imprint on the Third District and on the development of the law throughout California,” stated Acting Presiding Justice Coleman A. Blease.

When informed of Justice Puglia’s death, Chief Justice Ronald M. George issued the following statement:

“I had the pleasure and honor of knowing Justice Robert Puglia for more than 40 years. We first met as attorneys when we served together on the State Bar’s Criminal Law and Procedure Committee. Over the years, I have had many occasions to become familiar with his jurisprudence as a justice of the Court of Appeal.

“As Chief Justice and Chair of the Administrative Presiding Justices Committee, I also worked with him in his role as Administrative Presiding Justice of the Third District on matters essential to the functioning of the courts. In all areas, he displayed the keen intelligence and dedication to the administration of justice that made him a leader in the courts.

“Justice Puglia was a strong personality. He was not shy about stating his beliefs, nor about challenging others to justify theirs. But he was willing to listen to the views of others, willing to learn—and willing to change his mind if warranted. Above all, devotion to a strong and independent judiciary was a constant theme in his thoughts and actions. The admiration and affection in which he was held by so many with whom he worked demonstrates how his focus on progress and leadership during his

(over)

tenure as Administrative Presiding Justice affected not only the rule of law, but also the many individuals who work every day to improve it.

“Justice Puglia’s keen sense of humor, legal insight, and enjoyment of the give and take of the legal endeavor, will be greatly missed, and I am most grateful for his many fine contributions to our state’s judicial development. Personally and on behalf of the Supreme Court, I extend my deepest condolences to his family and friends.”

A native of Ohio, Justice Puglia worked his way through Ohio State University. Following college, he enlisted in the army and fought in the Korean War, serving with the Third Infantry Division.

When he returned from the war, he enrolled at Boalt Hall School of Law, University of California, Berkeley. He supported himself in law school by washing dishes after class in a variety of restaurants. Upon graduation in 1958, he moved to Sacramento where he met and married his wife, Ingrid. He joined the Sacramento District Attorney’s office and quickly became a formidable prosecutor and a legal scholar. Within a few years he was appointed the Chief Deputy District Attorney.

In 1969, Justice Puglia left the District Attorney’s office to become a partner at the law firm of McDonough Holland, Schwartz, Allen & Wahrhaftig. His career in a private law firm was cut short in 1972 when Governor Ronald Reagan appointed him to the Sacramento Superior Court in 1971 and then as an associate justice on the Court of Appeal in August of 1974, followed by appointment as the presiding justice six months later.

It was in his 24 years as the Presiding Justice that he made his greatest contribution to the law and found the most satisfaction ‘weighing in’ on the important legal issues of the day and guiding the court through the good times and the tough times,” noted Justice Morrison. “His clear and elegant opinions reflect a philosophy of judicial restraint and his passionate belief in the limited role of a judge in a democratic society,” stated Justice Blease.

Although deeply devoted to the law, his greatest passion was his family. Justice Puglia is survived by his wife of 46 years, Ingrid, and by his children Susan, Peter, David, and Thomas and three grandchildren.

Following his retirement in 1998, Justice Puglia enjoyed working in his old law firm, McDonough Holland & Allen, where he arbitrated and mediated disputes, and had more time for family and travel.

“With his intellect and no nonsense manner, Justice Puglia could be formidable, even intimidating; but he had a delightful wit and a heart of gold,” said Justice Blease.

The special session to honor the record service of Justice Puglia scheduled for Friday, March 25, 2005, from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m., in the Stanley Mosk Library and Courts Building, Sacramento, is cancelled. The Court of Appeal will hold a memorial session at a later date.

#